The Theosophical FORUM

JULY 1902

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THE THEOSOPHICAL

FORUM

VOL. 8. JULY, 1902 No. 3

SUSTAINED EFFORT.

When the waters were draining off the surface of the Earth, ages ago, they began, in places, to wash away the solid rock, grain by grain. At first little impression was made, but still the steadily running water kept on, and century after century, it cut deeper into the rock. . Thus perhaps a million years have produced our mountain cañons, with walls of solid rock thousands of feet high, and where, in places, the light of day seldom penetrates to the bottom.

How many years of growth go to make the mighty oak? And how many more have passed over the head of the gigantic Red Wood? The immense beds of coal; the deposits of gold, silver, iron; the growth of crystals, diamonds, rubies and emeralds. Can anyone estimate the vast reaches of time necessary to produce all these?

And so it is all through nature: great results follow steadily sustained, but slight effort.

A minute, or an hour or a day of exertion amounts to nothing, but they all count when combined with other minutes, hours and days, which will go on and on even to the end.

As the Law works in the material world, so it does in the spiritual. Effort, constant effort in the right direction, will as surely accomplish results, as dripping water will wear away rocks. The higher part of man is not material, and so progress may be rapid, in some cases astonishingly so, yet in all cases effort must be sustained.

My aspirations are upward, I desire to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but my personal self is in no wise fit for it. I must transmute my lower nature into Gold, before I can realize on my aspirations.

There are days when I rise upward: I can feel the breath of Heaven in my soul, my progress seems easy, I can feel myself grow. The world around me is bright. Then there comes a day when darkness settles over my spirit: I can see nothing, I become numb, God seems afar off. This is the hour of trial, now comes the need of sustained effort. It may be that with all my strength I can just barely hold on, while the waves of darkness sweep over me. But if I merely can hold on, it is already a great gain. For if I let go even for a moment the opposing evil sweeps me off my feet, and backward, downward, so swiftly that before I can gather my strength, I am far away from the point I had reached.

So *hold fast.* The powers of darkness will spend their force, and our harrassed selves will again come into the sunshine and rise Heavenward.

But if I let go, as often happens, and having been rushed back along the path, I finally check my retrogression. Then comes a moment of sickening regret, a period of discouragement, perhaps of despair. And so long as we continue in this state of regret we shall make no progress.

The powers of evil need not exert themselves then, they may stay quiet watching as we flounder in the toils of remorse.

Therefore, let us swiftly spring away from this despair. God is still our God, and in an instant we can have the sunshine of his love in our hearts again. It is a question of effort. We have the *desire* behind the will, and so we must make our efforts through the force of our will.

As in lifting a log we put our muscles to work through our will, so we must put our mind to work and direct our thoughts.

Thoughts are powers: by them we rise or are cast down.

If we can not lift the log we may be able to lift our end of it, or saw it in pieces, or use some contrivance. But lift it we will in time, when we decide to do so and keep up the effort.

So by constant right thinking we attain our highest desires. No matter how bad our failures, they can be turned into a means of final victory. For we can be sure that sooner or later we shall again reach the point whence we slipped before. And by examining our failures impartially we can train our feet for a firm and unwavering advancement along the path.

Do not despair.

Do not regret.

Learn from failures the way to success and keep up the effort. Results *will* follow.

THE NATIVITY OF BUDDHA.

I feel more convinced than ever that Ashva Ghosha's Sanskrit Life of Buddha will be the Life of Buddha which will hold the attention of the world once it finds an adequate, readable, and popular translation in English. For, though Professor Cowell's Translation, in the Sacred Books of the East, is certainly adequate, from the point of scholarship, and though we all admit his easy supremacy in the Sanskrit Renaissance Literature, yet it would be flattery to call this formidable volume readable, or, indeed, much more than barely intelligible to anyone who does not follow it with the Sanskrit text in hand. I was fortunate enough to read the Sanskrit version first—several chapters in the middle of the book, that is to say—and only after that I discovered Professor Cowell's admirable scholarly version, bound up with a rendering of the Sukhavati Vyuha and the Vajrochchhetika, in a volume bearing the accurate but uninviting title "Mahayana Scriptures." I wonder what chance of popularity a book has with a title like that! I wonder how many readers Professor Cowell has had since his volume was published, or, indeed, will have during the next decade? It is sad to think of the vast quantity of splendid work buried, interred, entombed, in the Proceedings of our Oriental Society, our University Series, our Journals of Research, and the like; and to think how wholly they fail to touch the living world of men. Then comes a writer like Edwin Arnold, with his wonderful facility and his great popular gift, and does more for Buddhism than all the scholars put together—and this without any signal erudition, or any great claim to scholarship at all. And the world is with Edwin Arnold, and the world is right. If we cannot make our work effectual in the world of living men and women, then our work is vain.

But to return to the nativity of Buddha. I know not whether we are to ascribe to Ashva Ghosha the first twenty stanzas with their gorgeous description of the Holy City of Kapila Vastu, in which the heavenly child was born. On the one hand, the Tibetan and Chinese versions leave out this description, while, on the other, it is perfectly in place, and even essential to the completeness and unity of the poem, and is quite in Ashva Ghosha's style and manner. Let

me quote a few verses to show how the poet describes the Holy City of Buddhism:—

"There was a City, the mighty sage Kapila's dwelling-place; girt with the beauty of broad uplands, as with a chain of clouds; its lofty roofs upreared against the sky.

There, neither darkness nor poverty found a dwelling-place, so bright was it with the radiance of jewels; and smiling fortune gladly dwelt among those righteous men.

And, for that there was not seen the like of the City in the whole world, for the beauty of its arbors and arches, and spires like lions' ears, the dwellings of it could vie with nothing but each other.

And the sun even at his setting, could not forget the lovely faces of its women, that put the lotus-blooms to shame; and hastened toward the western ocean to slake his passion in the waves.

By night, the silver cupolas, lit up by the moon's white rays, made a mock of the water-lillies; by day, when the sunbeams shone on the golden domes of the palaces, they took upon them the beauty the yellow lotuses."

Even in a prose version, and that by no means a final one, we can easily see the rich, Oriental splendour of writing like this. And here let me anticipate a possible criticism. The whole story of the nativity of Buddha, with its immaculate conception by the Holy Law, its angel visitants, its wise men seeing his sign in the heavens, and coming to visit him, cannot but compel comparisons with the old, familiar story of the heavenly Child of Bethlehem, and the shepherds who watched their flocks by night. And it will doubtless be pointed out how the simplicity, humility, and poverty of the one scene contrast with the almost impossible magnificence of the other,—and thus we shall have prepared the way to a total misapprehension of the Buddhist poet's aim, in piling splendour upon splendour, and scattering the whole earth with pearls, and cloth of gold, and scented flowers. His aim is in the highest degree worthy, and shows the highest artistic sense. This is only one side of the medal; look at the companion picture, Buddha, homeless, friendless, in a single cloth, his beggar's bowl in hand, with one aim only—to bring the healing wisdom to the world. Every heightened touch of colour bears with it this refrain:—He left it all to set us free! That is, to the Buddhist writer, and to all sympathetic readers, the true mean-

ing of these gorgeous descriptive stanzas that record the Buddha's birth.

The description of the Holy City is followed by a courtly picture of its King, Shuddhodana, who plays a very dramatic part in the chapter of the Renunciation, at a subsequent stage of the story. Here we are told, in a passage of most skilful antithesis, that "though sovereign of all, he was yet surrounded by friends; though very generous, he was not rashly lavish; though a King, he yet dealt equal justice to all; though very gracious, he was full of warlike fire." His consort, the Queen Maya, mother of the Master, was not less richly endowed, for "she was loved as a mother by the simple folk, while the great esteemed her as a friend. She was a very goddess of good luck in the family of the King." Ashva Ghosha tells us that the Buddha was born in a garden, amongst flowering trees, and blossoms of the scarlet mandhara, with the hosts of celestials gathered round to bear him up, and streams of heavenly water to purify the new-born teacher of mankind:—"And the babe, by the brightness of his limbs, dimmed all other lights, as does the sun; he lit up the whole world by his beauty. And, bright as the seven stars, he took seven steps, firm, unwavering, and thus he spoke:—'For wisdom am I born to save the world; this is my final birth.'" Then follows a long, and very beautiful passage, in which we are told how all Nature did homage to the new-born child, and how the heavenly visitants gathered round him, and ministered to him. We shall not be guilty of the shallow criticism which bids us reject all this because it savours of miracle; the true miracle is, that a man, born among men, should win such love and reverence from his fellows that, five centuries after his death, the poets should vie with each other in beautiful inventions and arts to do him honour; and that, twenty centuries later, the poets' words should still be lovingly remembered. It seems to me that much of our criticism of Buddha's doctrine, which represents the sage's teaching as hopeless, harsh, and cold, leaves out of account altogether the vital fact that Buddha has held the hearts of nearly a hundred generations, while such a doctrine as his critics attribute to him could appeal to no one, and even repels the critics themselves. What is certain is that Buddha's personality and words had an immense and immediate influence over his hearers, and a benign influence as well, and no account of his

doctrine is trustworthy which does not reckon with this cardinal fact.

Very eloquent, and full of dramatic power, is the episode of the coming of the sage, Asita, who has been the Buddha's sign in the heavens, and comes from afar to pay him reverence:—

"Then the mighty seer, Asita, through signs and his magical power, perceiving that He was born who should make an end of birth, came to the palace of the Shakya King, eager for the Good Law. And the King's confessor, himself a sage among sages, received the seer luminous with wisdom, and grace, and the magic of devotion. And he entered the inner chamber of the King, where all was gladness at the Prince's birth, full of power and holiness, and also full of years. The King then set the saint upon a seat, and had water brought to wash his feet, and hospitable offerings; welcoming him with deference, as Antideva of old welcomed Vasishta: —'Fortunate am I, and favoured is my house, that thou art come to visit us! Let my lord command what shall be done, for I am thy disciple, therefore speak confidently to me.' Thus the Saint was welcomed by the King, with all honour, as was seemly. And the Saint, with wide-eyed wonder, spoke these words of deepest wisdom:—'This graces thee well, mightly-hearted King, that thy heart is open to me as a dear guest, who have renounced the world, and desire only the law; this becomes thy goodness, thy wisdom, and thine age. Thus did the Kingly sages,—they who, for the Law, gave up the wealth that perishes, growing rich in holiness, though poor in this world's goods. But what is the purpose of my coming —hear thou, and rejoice:—A heavenly voice was heard by me, on the heavenly way, that a son was born to thee for wisdom. And hearing the voice, and setting my mind to it, and discerning the signs, I am come here; my desire is to behold Him who shall raise aloft the banner of the Shakya name, as they raise Indra's banner at the festival.'

'The King, hearing this word, was tremulous with exultation, took the child from the nurse's arms, and showed it to the man of penances.'"

I cannot resist the temptation to point out that, in spite of the miraculous element, this is a very human touch. Shuddhodana is the proud papa all over, even though he is a King, and his baby a future sage. The seer verified the miraculous marks of the child

—the circle on his palms, the membrane of skin between his fingers, the ring of hair between his brows, as he lay in the nurse's arms, like Agni's son in the arms of his goddess mother. And then comes a profound and pathetic touch. The sage, beholding him, and knowing that he was indeed the Teacher, turned aside with tears trembling on his eye lashes, and sighed deeply, looking up to heaven. The King, seeing Asita sorrowing, was greatly terrified, thinking that some evil should befall his son, that early death threatened him, or that misfortune menaced the kingdom. He begged Asita to tell him truly—hardly daring to name the calamities he feared—"with a sob, and his voice choked by tears." The sage thus replied:—

"Change not thy faith, O King, for what I have said is fixed and sure. I am full of sorrow, not for any evil that shall befall him, but for my own disappointment. For my time has come to depart, but this teacher of the Law, whose like is hard to find, is but newly born. He shall give up his kingdom, free himself from sensual temptations, and win the truth by strenuous effort. He shall shine forth to slay the darkness of the world, for he is a sun of wisdom .

From the ocean of sorrow, whose scattered foam is sickness, whose waves are age, whose swift tide is death, he shall rescue the world, carried away and afflicted, on the mighty boat of knowledge.

This thirsting human world shall drink his righteous river of the Law, whose tide is wisdom, whose banks are righteousness, whose cool waters are the soul's peace, and vows the birds upon its stream.

He shall point out the way of freedom to the sorrowing who are wandering in the bye-paths of the world, in the midst of the forests of sense—who have lost their way.

To the people in the world who are burned with the fire of passion, whose fuel is lust, he shall bring the refreshing waters of the law, as a great cloud brings rain to a weary land.

He shall open the prison—whose bolts are lust, and whose doors are delusion and darkness—and shall set the people free. With the blows of the Good Law shall he break it open, the excellent and invincible Law.

He shall free from the bondage of their own delusions the people, bound, and sorrowing and hopeless; the King of righteousness shall set them free.

Therefore be not troubled at my sorrow; grieve only for those who will not hear the Law.

All my holiness is lost, its virtue gone, for that I shall not hear Him. I count it sorrow now to enter Paradise."

It would be hard to match the eloquence and pathos of this passage by any other throughout the whole of Ashva Ghosha's work. It would be hard to match them even from the Bibles of the world.

THE HOLY LIGHT.

The earth was dark, but high above on the mountains hung the radiance of the Holy Light.

And I said:

Behold! I will journey thither, and dwell in the light, and joy shall be my portion forever.

So I journeyed onward, but upon the road I met one who tarried, for he was lame.

And he called to me: "Brother abide here a little and find for me the crutch I have lost."

But I answered: "Surely I cannot stay, knowest thou not, I journey to the great Light yonder? I shall need all my strength to reach it, I cannot spare it to thee." And he said sadly:

"Aye, go thy way, thou art not the first who has given to me that answer."

But I laughed gaily, glad to be upon the path again. And as I wandered further my way led through woods green, and beautiful.

But behold! even here the snare of the fowler made misery. Many creatures saw I trapped, bleeding, suffering, and I longed to stop and rescue them, but the Holy Light seemed so fair, I could not wait. I passed onward. And it seemed to me the very leaves took voice, and cried, saying: "Aye, go thy way, the Holy Light beckons. We can wait."

And if a reproach dwelt in the words, I soon forgot it in thinking of the radiance.

And at length I reached the foot of the great mountain on whose summit shone the light. And as I approached a woman came towards me, and in her hands a great book rested, and she besought me saying, "I pray you tarry here awhile, and unfold to me the secrets of this book?" And I took the volume and glanced at its contents. On its title page was written the word "Love." And I smiled at the woman's earnestness, and gave back to her the book. And I answered: "Nay, I cannot stay, Love is but pain." And I journeyed towards the Light, where all is joy.

And as I passed upward the sound of weeping reached me, but I heeded it not, for the light seemed so near, and shone so brightly.

Now, I had almost reached the summit of the great rock, when suddenly I stumbled.

Beneath my feet lay the body of a man, young in years, but wasted from struggling.

And he arose slowly, and faced me, and I saw that like myself, the longing for the light shone in his eyes. And he cried joyfully:

"At last, Brother, thou hast come to lend me thy help. See I have struggled thus far, though I tarried by the roadside, and in the green woods, for others needed my strength. But the woman down yonder I passed by. Yet as I journeyed on, the heat grew great, and I paused to rest, and now I cannot move without help, my limbs are sore with weariness."

And he stretched forth his arms, as if to embrace me, but I drew back and answered,

"Surely if as thou sayest, the heat is great, all my strength do I need for myself. The next to come will help thee."

And I passed on, but the man sank down groaning. And the Light was so near I sang with joy, and soon I heard him no more.

I mounted higher and still higher,and at length I stood upon the very pinnacle of the mountain. It was glorious there.

A thousand rays of colors danced in the clear air; a thousand golden sunbeams fell upon my face; a brightness of Divinity dwelt everywhere.

I breathed in the glory, my eyes reveled in its beauty, my soul sang aloud in its joy.

Suddenly my breath failed, great shooting pains wrenched my limbs, I sank to the ground in agony. My eyes grew dim, and sunken in their sockets. The song of my soul was stilled. Then, while I lay in fearful torture, a soft voice spake from out the Light and said,

"Wherefore hast thou gained the right to stand in the Holy Radiance, to dwell in its supreme joy, to taste of its eternal sweetness?"

And despite my anguish I answered,

"I have journeyed thither, no man helped me. I have a right to that which I have gained."

Then the voice spake still more softly, and there were tears in it. And it said:

"True! No man helped thee. And thou? Hast thou helped no man?"

Then a great shame came upon me, and I hid my face and would not answer.

After a moment I arose, and turned by back upon the Light, for I had meted out my own punishment. And I took my way down the mountain.

And the man lay there, still weary, and he beckoned to me, but I said: "Rest yet awhile, I must seek the path lower down. I will return and help thee." And the woman was waiting still, but I cried: "Wait, I have work further back, I will return." And as I passed through the green woods, they cried to me loudly, but I said: "Cease, I shall come again."

And behold! the cripple too still waited, and he welcomed me with joy. And I tarried long searching with him for the lost, but in vain. At last I said, "Come, Brother, I will be thy crutch, and we will seek the light together." But we journeyed slowly, for I bore the burden of two. Then we entered the green woods, and spent many days therein setting the trapped creatures free, but many of them were savage, others ungrateful, still others ignorant of our purpose, and they turned upon us, and struck their sharp teeth, and fierce nails into our flesh. So much time passed ere our wounds healed, and we could pass onward.

At last we reached the base of the mountain. And the woman again gave to me the book. And we sat down, and I turned the pages while the woman held the volume. And we studied it together, and the Radiant Light shone upon its words and made them clear, so that we understood its mysteries. And at length when the last leaf was turned, the woman arose, and grasped my free hand, and we three set out to journey up the mountain. At sunset we reached the weary traveller, and still he could not rise. But the woman read from the book, and gathered healing herbs and with them rubbed his limbs, so that he was rested.

But I had no free hand to hold out to him, and yet he could not walk alone.

And the woman said:

"Give to him the one I have grasped, while I go on before. The book shall be my help and guide."

The sun had set, but the Holy Light shone steadily. And we came out upon the top of the mountain, and all stood together facing the light, drinking in its wonders.

And as I looked a heaviness fell upon my spirit. This time my soul sang not, neither did my pulses throb with delight. The woman came to me and said:

"What is it?"

And I answered not, only turned from the Light, and looked down into the valley.

The valley was so dark, and silent.

And I began to retrace my steps, but my Brother men sought to detain me.

I undid their hands from my arms, and I said: "I cannot stay here in the Light, and joy. See how my comrades toil in the dark valley. I must go and work with them."

And my Brother men held me no longer.

"We will stay here," they said.

But the woman came to my side. "I will go and carry the book," she whispered, "We will need it down there."

And so little by little we wandered back, and the Light was forever behind us, but we thought not of it, for our eyes were filled with the tears of compassion, and our strength was given in the service of our comrades. The valley was dark, but we had no time to think of its gloom.

And after many years, we turned to gaze upon the Light, just to look once again at its glory.

And behold! the Light had faded, it had hidden itself forever.

And I cried aloud in my sorrow; I longed so to see the Light again.

But the woman smiled. She drew near, and opened the great book, and where her finger pointed, through my tears, I read these lines:

"And the Light had faded from the sky. It shone forever in their hearts. They dwell in its eternal glory. Truth, and Love have conquered darkness."

BALZAC'S LITERARY STATURE.

It is a literary problem of great delicacy, to find Balzac's true place among the writers of his country. He has been greatly, perhaps extravagantly, praised by Victor Hugo; a critic so luminous as Sainte-Beuve has carefully measured to him his meed of honor; Taine has dazzlingly recorded his qualities; he has been set on a pedestal beside Shakespeare and Molière. Yet, for a large part of the world, he remains practically unknown. Does he belong to the immortals? Is he to rank with Goethe?—the only modern whose divinity is admitted and assured, or is his place rather with lesser lights, like Hugo or Zola or Flaubert, or Daudet —each of whom seems destined to a niche amongst the lesser powers in the Temple of Fame? Some of his admirers have spoken of Balzac as tremendous; one cannot but feel that this is going too far; yet one feels just as clearly that there is a certain greatness in him—something deserving of more careful and discerning study.

II.

We can hardly answer this question without seeking some kind of an answer to that much larger one: what is it that confers the highest rank on a writer? or, more generally, what is really great literature? what is the supreme quality, the heart of the matter?

It would seem to be this: a revelation of the divinity of life; an intimate unveiling to our souls of our touch with immortal powers, of the angelic and daemonic forces in whose midst we dwell. This is the reason why the books which do this are at once the oldest and the most venerated in the world; man, who in the long run understands his true profit, has found it worth his while to preserve them. We will guard for milleniums those writings only which set us among the divinities, and reveal to us our immortal powers. No boon is equal to this; nothing else has enduring value.

The next quality we demand is humanity; a sane and abundant knowledge of the human heart. The work must ring true; must answer to our own experience; must vividly embody, out of the infinite breadth and richness of this our human destiny, throughout all lands and all times, at least some part, some genuine passion, thought, experience, which we can recognize as human and akin to

ourselves. A national note will not suffice; we demand something wider. A national note is enough for awhile; writers who have struck this note, even forcing it sometimes into a piercing cry, may do for their own time, their own race. But every race passes; for every nation the hour strikes; then the real ordeal comes. Will the men of other races, of alien tongues, find the writing worth preserving? Will they find it speaking clearly enough to them, to induce them to learn a foreign tongue, to think themselves into a strange and unfamiliar atmosphere? It not, the writer is doomed. Provinciality, even when it is called patriotism, is fatal. We demand something more; we demand a note that shall ring true for the whole human race; for some part of each one of us.

Genuine vividness of presentation, a true picturing of visible and outward things, is the next necessity. A writer must have his eyes open, and must paint things as we are used to see them; he must have a sound sense of the furniture of life, the manner in which we carry on our daily work. Pastorals and Eclogues, impossible heroics and fantasies, may amuse and even delight us for awhile; but they can have no permanent hold on us. This is why much that passes as poetry is becoming every year more lightly esteemed; this is why the so-called historical novels are doomed. A sounder knowledge of history will reveal them for the fantastic things they are. We shall find them out, and realise that things never happened anywhere in that gorgeous and amazing way.

Lastly, we have excellence of form, a quality which many of us would be inclined to set first of all. But this seems to be its real place, in part, because a true insight into form is about the last thing a nation learns, and is, moreover, a thing almost wholly unrevealed as yet to our modern world. Witness the amazing hideousness of our clothed portrait-statues, with their top-hats and great coats, and heavily creased trousers. One wonders whether they would make Phidias weep or laugh. So few people realise the value of form, that our writers, like our sculptors, can almost afford to ignore it. Then again, beauty of form means economy of effort, while also meaning very much more. In the olden days, when the preservation of a work, whether by memory or in writing, was a thing of great labour and pains, economy of form counted for very much more. Verse is easier to remember than prose;

therefore verse was unconsciously favored for this reason, while men consciously delighted in it for its finer qualities. The old writers and poets had to economise space, on pain of being forgotten. But nowadays, there is a fatal ease in reproducing even trivial, diffuse and chaotic works; the pressure of the struggle for life is lightened; the law has not yet adjusted itself to our new conditions. The time will certainly come when excellent economy of force will be rightly esteemed, but that time is not come yet.

To propose a canon of criticism of such far-reaching import is already a very considerable compliment to Balzac; but this course is the more justified when we see that Balzac consciously proposed to himself the attainment of excellence in each of the four realms we have outlined. How far did he attain it?

III.

Balzac was a constant seeker after the divine meaning of human life. He even formulated a spiritual system very like that of St. Paul; a triple division of our powers into body, soul and spirit; or into the natural, psychic and celestial, to use Paul's own words: a triple division used before Paul's day in the Mysteries of ancient Egypt and India. This threefold division of our nature sets apart a middle realm for our more definitely human qualities; that in us which has risen above the animal, while not yet reaching the angel. It therefore escapes the absurdity of attributing merely human passion and weaknesses to our immortal life, and defines a great field of evolution, a preparation for immortality, in which we can well see the purpose of so much that would otherwise seem disjoined and chaotic in our human fate. Balzac also consciously accepted that sense of the continuity of life for each individual soul, which inspired all the great religions of antiquity, and which is surely returning to our modern world, with thinkers like Lessing and Schopenhauer, Emerson and Whitman as pioneers of its acceptance. He further sees the shining goal of all our life, when all "shall be perfected into One," that One which is "all things in all things."

This high intuition of life is with Balzac always; and we can see at once how this lifts him high above so many novelists, in his permanent worth. For without injustice it may be said of nearly all novels in the English language, that they betray no intuition of

life at all; that they seem blissfully unconscious of the abysses which lie about us everywhere. The English novelists never took themselves seriously. They can hardly ask us to do so. They are mere painters of surfaces, and their widest flight hardly goes beyond an infusion of sentimentality, to give their readers thrills, while it is latterly becoming the fashion to reach effect by mere excess of brutality. This is the fatal blemish on a work like "Tess," for instance, which otherwise is not without elements of greatness. The "Anglo-Saxon" novel, to use a wholly inaccurate phrase, is with every year becoming more and more a mirror for maidens in search of an establishment; as if the marrying of girls were the real aim of life. The really popular novel is that which paints a perfect heroine, in which each gentle and aspiring reader can behold her own likeness, and can imagine herself going through those deliciously thrilling tribulations, and receiving those charming tributes to her unbounded worth. They are literature in the sense that a masquerade is a high political function, or that the portraits of a theatrical company are art. In a certain church in an old Austrian town, they have two Madonnas, a blonde and a brunette, who take turns to parade, so that all tastes may be satisfied. I suggest that the "Anglo-Saxon" novel should invariably have two equally perfect heroines, one dark, and the other fair, both of whom should marry delightful young millionaires, and live happy ever afterwards.

The great Russian novels are simply in another world. They are, in fact, the only novels yet written which one could without absurdity compare to the work of Sophocles or Dante or Goethe. They are really written for adults. But, with the exception of golden-tongued Turgenieff, they are marred by grave defects of form and style. We shall have more to say of this, later on.

But when Balzac comes to put his ideas into practice, we are at once conscious of something seriously wrong. His most ambitious flights into the region of mysticism are "Louis Lambert" and "Seraphita." There are very high qualities in the former; the pictures of school-life at the old College of the Oratorians of Vendome is in every way admirable and vivid; it breathes forth reality and life. The ill-kept, unventilated class-rooms, the stuffy atmosphere of faultfinding and shirking, the narrowness, lit up by occa-

sional humane gleams, of the teachers, the poignant and pathetic affection of the Poet and Pythagoras are as good in their way as anything Dostoyevsky or Tolstoi has ever written. But when Louis Lambert escapes from school and begins to lead life in the world, the whole story goes to pieces. Its conclusion, the picture of the crazed and comatose philosopher, standing day and night like a sightless mummy against a wall, while his adoring spouse records the occasional oracles which, descending from above, pierce the darkness of his night, is by no means magnificent or tremendous, as Balzac thinks it is; it is simply grewsome and grotesque. The first part of this really great story, though it is a great story spoiled, irresistibly suggests "Sartor Resartus;" and, for the most part, it is of fairly equal value. But both Carlyle and Balzac, having evolved their enlightened and spiritual heroes, have been greatly embarrassed as to what in the world they were to do with them; Carlyle made his hero Professor of Things-in-general at the University of Lord-knows-where; Balzac plunged his into unworldly abstraction and premature death. The truth is, that while all novelists of the better sort are being drawn away from the pretty millionaire as the type of a hero, and are feeling their way towards some sort of spiritual attainment as the real goal of life, none, so far, has had any gleam of insight as to what should be done with the demi-angel, once you have him hatched. That is one of the problems for our new century, both in literature and in life.

Balzac's other great mystical story, "Seraphîta," I must frankly confess, I find simply unreadable. In the old French stereotyped edition in which I read it, "Seraphîta" covers some hundred and seventy pages. Seventy of these are made up of two speeches, each delivered without even a pause for breath. First the Pastor speaks thirty pages of encyclopedic biography of Swedenborg; then the mystical being, "Seraphîtus-a-um," delivers forty pages on the relations of Matter and Spirit, Doubt and Faith. No wonder the Pastor and Wilfrid were aghast—though the former's own achievement might have prepared his mind for this retributive justice. Balzac evidently has in mind the sexless angels "who neither marry nor are given in marriage," and he has had the wild idea of expressing this by juggling with the personal pronouns. When the androgynous hero-heroine speaks to Minna, it is a "he;" when ad-

dressing Wilfrid, it becomes a "she." This reminds one of the tourist at Heliopolis: "Say, Maria, I'm all tangled up; which was *mister*, Isis or Osiris?" This sort of thing makes us sigh for the pretty millionaire and the dinky heroine of "Anglo-Saxon" fiction.

If we are to compare Louis Lambert with Teufelsdroeckh—and we should have noted that the really excellent parts of both are faithful autobiography—then Seraphîtus-a suggests comparison with Zanoni, the handsome Chaldean, who falls desperately in love with Viola, in the three thousandth year of his protracted youth. All these stories take us back to that epoch of really great spiritual thought which awoke with the French Revolution, but which, like that revolution, was hardly more than a splendid failure. For a comparative success in this kind of writing, we must go back to the history of Krishna, or to Ashva Ghosha's Life of Buddha; though each is marred by a too luxuriant thaumaturgy. Even Plato's awakened hero rather states the Riddle of Life than answers it. But the mention of Plato and Socrates, of Buddha and Krishna, may remind us how great was the task attempted by Balzac, Carlyle and Bulwer; the attempt was fine, even though success eluded them.

IV.

When Carlyle comes to write of Cromwell, of Frederick, of the great Mirabeau, we at once feel an excellent breadth and height, which are the solid rewards of his earlier metaphysical searching. Here is the payment for having attempted Teufelsdroeckh. In the same way, Balzac is repaid for his mystical struggles, when he comes to unroll the great canvas of "The Human Comedy." Here is his real title to greatness. Comparisons with Molière, even with Shakespeare, cease to be absurd; the more detailed we make them, the greater becomes their accuracy and justice. No writer has attempted to portray such a host of different characters. No writer, unless we except Shakespeare, has succeeded so excellently well. And, when it comes to the psychology of children, Balzac is greater than Shakespeare. I wonder whether the remark is original, but it always seems to me that, before the nineteenth century, there were no real children in literature—only little men and little women. That is a vista of democracy which deserves a poet. The emancipa-

tion of children is a vastly greater achievement than the emancipation of slaves.

It is very much against Balzac, that his children are invariably unhappy, and, for the most part, have bad parents, stern and unnatural mothers, and inefficient fathers. Unfortunately, Balzac seems here to have been painting his own life, as he so perpetually did. But, with these drawbacks, Balzac's children are real. His men and women are even more real, and they answer finely to our demand for a wide and human view, no mere parochialism masquerading as patriotic. He paints French men and women with incomparable vividness and truth; but his Lady Dudley is just as true to her nation as they are to theirs. She is, in many ways, a finer English type than one can recall, among a host of English novelists, who are perpetually struggling with namby-pamby misses, perfumed, as Byron viciously said, with bread and butter. Lord Dudley, too, is a fine figure, though less splendidly finished; but there is enough of him to make a sound, national type; and lesser English figures here and there in the "Comedy" are as racy of the soil. There is something reminiscent of the large outlines of Chaucer and Shakespeare in Balzac's English types; and indeed he is steeped in the spirit of Shakespeare, as his treatment, not less than his frequent quotation, shows. Then there are admirable Italian types, like the Neapolitan prince and princess in the story-within-a-story, in Albert Savarus. We must go to Manzoni and D'Annunzio for anything equally good, among the Italians themselves. Here we are once more reminded of Shakespeare; of his Bassanios, his Montagues, his Tybalts. And we can truly say that, for human and national truth, Balzac fairly stands the comparison. The Norwegian Pastor, the German music-master, the Spanish grandee, are all equally true to life, and we need not go farther than the correspondence with Mme. de Hanska, to see how keenly Balzac entered into the spirit of the Slavonic nations. Now, to enter with warm sympathy and true insight into the lives of other nations, is a very great achievement indeed. If we remember that, in this, the Greeks failed not less signally than the Jews, we shall have a truer measure of its importance. Indeed, the vivid sense of humanity as one and indivisible, the ability to "turn to north, south, east and west with thoughts of love," as Buddha used to say, is among the highest and rarest qualities of human life. To say that, in this, Balzac is not far behind Shakespeare, is, perhaps, to say enough for his fame.

TO ALL OUR CONTRIBUTORS

IN THE SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL SENSE

Greeting!

"THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM" recently published a Notice, addressed to the authors of many unwritten articles, among its readers, praying them to get the said articles written down and sent to us. This request brought such good results, in the form of certain excellent contributions by quite new writers, that we are impelled to repeat our invitation. Good friends, no longer hide your talents in the napkin of the unmanifested, but precipitate them on paper, and give them to waiting humanity, through our pages. Be encouraged to tread in the path of the Sages who have gone before you! Let your inward revelations take body in the written word! Modesty is a beautiful virtue; so also is courage. Show that you are wise, by letting this word suffice.

Now to address our contributors in the material sense: "THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM" with every year grows firmer on its foundation, more able to stand alone. Its independent life grows and developes. A new milestone in its journey is passed, with this number. From henceforth, all subscriptions and donations are to be sent *to the Editor direct,* and no longer to four or five different addresses, in different cities. We hope soon to bring all subscriptions up to date, and, where subscribers have sent their contributions in the middle of a volume, we hope to send them notices asking for a supplementary subscription to carry their subscription forward to the beginning of a new volume. There are a good many among our readers whose subscriptions, like the articles alluded to above, still dwell in the unmanifested; these we shall ask to precipitate, to materialise. To all and sundry, we make the request that contributions, subscriptions, communications and sendings of whatever nature may in future be addressed to us direct; money being remitted by postal orders, payable to

The Editor,
THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM,
Flushing, N. Y.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AMERICA.

Founded by H. P. BLAVATSKY at New York in 1875.

The Society does not pretend to be able to establish at once a universal brotherhood among men, but only strives to create the nucleus of such a body. Many of its members believe that an acquaintance with the world's religions and philosophies will reveal, as the common and fundamental principle underlying these, that "spiritual identity of all Souls with the Oversoul" which is the basis of true brotherhood; and many of them also believe that an appreciation of the finer forces of nature and man will still further emphasize the same idea.

The organization is wholly unsectarian, with no creed, dogma, nor personal authority to enforce or impose; neither is it to be held responsible for the opinions of its members, who are expected to accord to the beliefs of others that tolerance which they desire for their own.

The following proclamation was adopted at the Convention of the Society held at Boston, April, 1895:

"The Theosophical Society in America by its delegates and members in Convention assembled, does hereby proclaim fraternal good will and kindly feeling toward all students of Theosophy and members of Theosophical Societies wherever and however situated. It further proclaims and avers its hearty sympathy and association with such persons and organizations in all theosophical matters except those of government and administration, and invites their correspondence and co-operation.

"To all men and women of whatever caste, creed, race, or religious belief, who aim at the fostering of peace, gentleness, and unselfish regard one for another, and the acquisition of such knowledge of men and nature as shall tend to the elevation and advancement of the human race, it sends most friendly greeting and freely proffers its services.

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"And lastly, it invites to its membership those who, seeking a higher life hereafter, would learn to know the *Path* to tread in this."

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